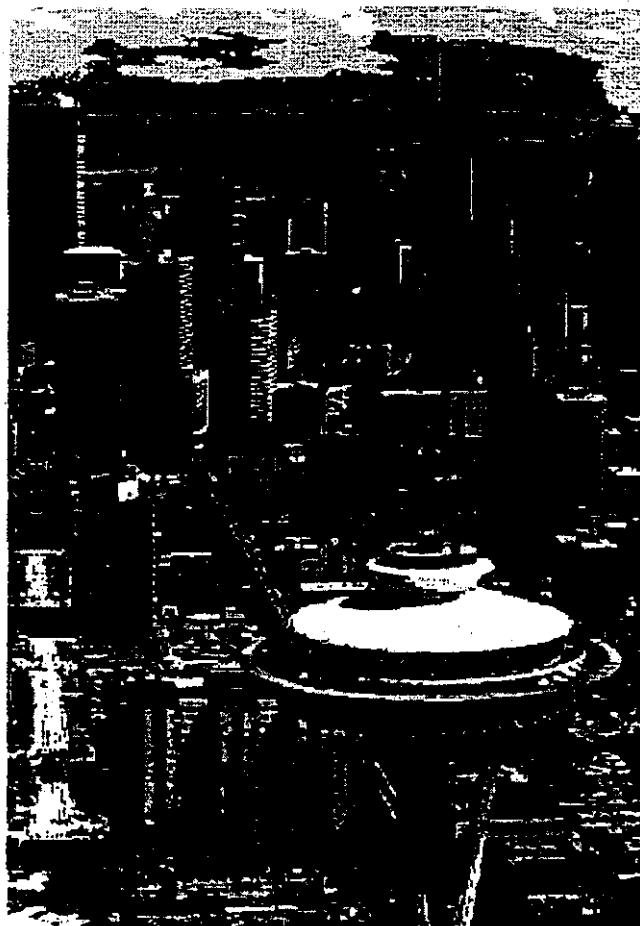

The Downtown Urban Center Neighborhood Plan

City of Seattle



April 1,2, 1999'

as proposed by the
DOWNTOWN URBAN CENTER PLANNING GROUP

THE DOWNTOWN SEATTLE PLAN

April 12, 1999

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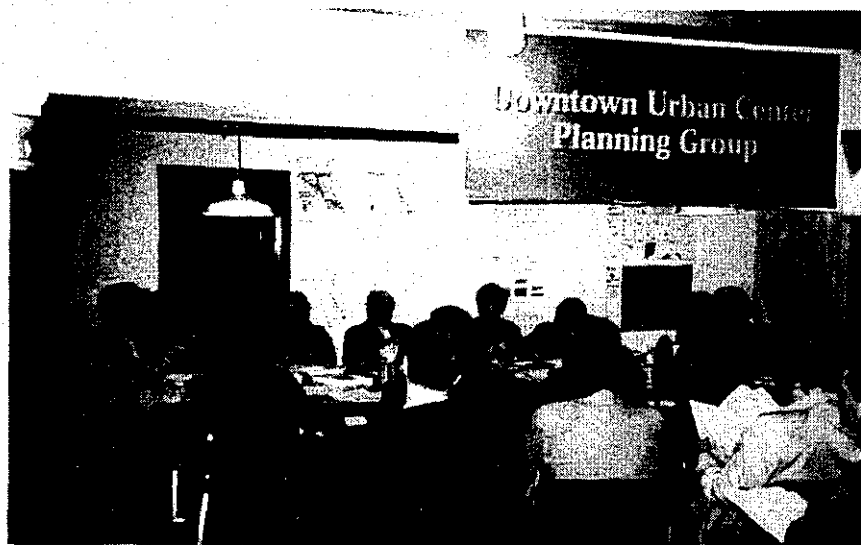
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L. INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY

The Downtown Urban Center Planning Group (DUCPG) is responsible for updating the 1985 Downtown Land Use and Transportation Plan ('85 Plan). While the '85 Plan has been updated periodically since 1985, it no longer provides the policy context established by the 1994 Seattle Comprehensive Plan and significant changes to the downtown which have occurred in recent years. The context for planning has been influenced by the following

- . The Comprehensive Plan established the Downtown Urban Center and further established five urban center villages within the urban center (Denny Triangle, Denny Regrade, Commercial Core, Pioneer Square, and International District). The neighborhood planning process has invested the downtown neighborhoods with the mission of creating community visions, addressing geographically-specific problems and opportunities, and producing plans for local improvements.
- . Recent downtown development activity has significantly changed the direction of the urban center's role in the region. Downtown Seattle has become a major tourist and convention attraction, strong retail shopping magnet, center of cultural and entertainment activities, and a home to evolving high technology businesses. The past 10 years have seen a near shut-down of new office development, increasing interest in downtown living and related development of intensive residential projects, construction of major cultural facilities, revitalization of the retail core and the central waterfront, and massive investment in the south downtown area.
- On the heels of these activities, the downtown is now "entering a new cycle of office and mixed-use development. Upcoming projects include approximately five million square feet of new office space and over 4,000 new residential dwelling

units.

- . Major transportation changes are coming to the downtown. While the '85 plan anticipated light rail service in the tunnel, the associated surface transit implications were not addressed in any quantitative way. The monorail initiative has further implications for downtown circulation. In addition, interests of the residential neighborhoods focused on pedestrian streets and green streets have surfaced as a major influence on decisions regarding use of our valuable rights-of-way. There is also a growing interest in providing more equitable treatment of bicycling within the downtown. Effective management of short- and long-term parking assets in the downtown needs to be coordinated with circulation systems linking major terminals, destinations, and access points.
- . Demographic and economic characteristics of the downtown resident population continue to shift, and this could result in an unhealthy combination of the very rich and the very poor. The '85 Plan is rightly aimed at maintaining low-income housing opportunities for disadvantaged residents. At the same time, we acknowledge the need to produce housing for low-moderate and moderate-income households in order to maintain a balanced community. With respect to this, the Downtown Plan recommends strong emphasis on housing programs aimed at producing new units to fill the gap serving households in the 50-80% median income range. Human, recreational, educational, and retail services associated with strong residential neighborhoods of all economic levels are also important to creating our vision of downtown.
- . The urban environment of the downtown is a precious resource for employees, residents, and visitors. Preservation and enhancement of significant buildings, views, and landmarks need to be coupled with higher design quality of the streetscape

environment and of private development. More open space and civic gathering places are critical to providing breathing room, recreational opportunities, and celebratory places that produce a humane city and promote neighborhood identity.

- . DUCPG recommends that a market analysis be prepared to investigate issues associated with overall downtown growth capacity for the future. The increased capacity proposed by the Denny Triangle Plan should be a major element of this analysis since the potential for additional downtown development is greatest in that area.

DUCPG has been working within this context to unite common downtown interests and create an urban framework that will eventually result in a wholesale update to the '85 Plan. The new Downtown Urban Center plan will collect and present the plans of the five urban center village neighborhoods within the umbrella of policies for land use, housing, transportation, human services, economic development, and capital facilities that combine to produce the downtown Seattle urban center to which we all aspire. DUCPG recognizes that this will be an on-going process which must deal with a fluid evolution of information and discussion that will continue as many separate initiatives such as Sound Transit, the monorail, and surrounding communities' plans move towards implementation.

Thus, the following goals and policies recommended by DUCPG are both pragmatic and visionary in nature. Pragmatic recommendations bring together downtown-wide program and project needs that have emerged from the collective work of the five neighborhoods, the Downtown Circulation Study, and the DUCPG Land Use, Transportation, Housing, and Human Services Committees. These address more imminent projects and program needs that the downtown community feels should be addressed by the City in the near future.

The more visionary recommendations were also formulated within the process and from intensive work with City departments engaged in on-going downtown planning and implementation. These are equally important, but will require more broad discussion and analysis.

Making the Plan

The DUCPG process began in June of 1995 with a series of informal discussions about downtown-wide and individual neighborhood issues. In November, 1995, a "kick-off" attracted 130 people and led to the formation of the DUCPG committee which formalized the working group of, neighborhood representatives charged with the downtown plan. During 1996, the DUCPG worked with the neighborhoods to coordinate the phase one work of generating vision statements and defining the scope of work for the planning. The overall vision statement adopted by the DUCPG is:

"The downtown Urban Center is a mosaic of residential and mixed use districts, regional cultural facilities, civic and *retail cores*. Within a preeminent urban center is the foundation for a *vital* Downtown. Respecting the unique identities of the *five* individual neighborhoods is as important" as recognizing the powerful forces which drive a larger regional *vision for Downtown*. *With this foundation in place, there is great potential to refine the art of living and working Downtown.* "

Each of the neighborhoods also adopted vision statements and work programs for the phase two planning.

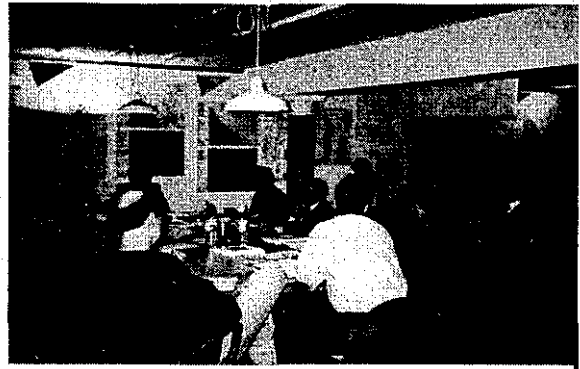
The DUCPG organized itself into committees addressing land "use and urban design, housing, transportation, and human services chaired by DUCPG members. Representatives from the neighborhoods were invited to

participate in the committee work and to

ensure that there was communication between the DUCPG committees and the related committee work at the neighborhood level. The DUCPG met monthly during 1996-98 to hear committee reports and direct the production of the downtown plan. Special events including workshops on "downtown futures", pedestrian and bicycle transportation, parking, human services and zoning were conducted. As alternatives emerged, the DUCPG held meetings and workshops to present them to the community.

A wrap-up validation mailer was distributed to 28,000 addresses within the downtown. It contained a response sheet and an invitation to a November, 1998 event where the draft plan was presented and discussed. In conjunction with the draft plan, the approval and adoption matrix was prepared, reviewed by the DUCPG and neighborhoods and presented to the city executive department for review and comment. The matrix contains "key strategies" that are presented as actions ranging from zoning changes to further work necessary to create a downtown urban design framework plan and a human services plan.

In January, 1999, the entire package, including the Mayor's recommendations, will be transmitted to the City Council which will hold committee discussions and hearings and ultimately adopt the plan in May or June. Individual councilmembers have attended DUCPG workshops throughout the process. When the plan arrives at the Council, they will also do a walking tour of the area which will be conducted by the DUCPG. Recently, the Mayor's cabinet participated in a similar tour to learn more about the plan priorities. Each of the downtown neighborhoods has gone through this same process with the DUCPG providing support during the Council review and public hearings. The DUCPG chairs are also briefing individual Council members on the plan.



Resources

The City provided over \$500,000 for both phases of the planning. This included a \$148,000 grant from the Federal Transit Administration which was used to fund a downtown circulation study that was folded into the downtown plan transportation element. Most of the funding went to a consultant team which prepared analyses, developed alternatives, and helped the committees package their ideas. Consultants were assigned to each of the standing DUCPG committees. A plan coordinator consultant worked with the DUCPG to compile the pieces, coordinate with the committees and neighborhoods, produce events, and facilitate meetings. A communications consultant was also retained to assist the DUCPG in formulating strategies for outreach to elected officials, key stakeholders, the media, and the public.

A major downtown property owner provided space for the Downtown Resource Center which the DUCPG used for meetings, enabled drop-in public access to work-in-progress, and contained work space for a part-time staff person who assisted in research, logistical support, and communication. This person also conducted a comprehensive survey of all downtown human service providers and developed a data base of the survey results to be used in the preparation of a human services plan for the community.

In addition to the above resources, a large amount of city staff time was invested including the Project Manager from the Neighborhood Planning Office and senior

planners and analysts from the Strategic Planning Office, and the Departments of Housing and Human Services, Transportation, and Construction and Land Use.

These professionals worked closely with the committees providing information, analysis, and guidance to ensure that the recommendations worked with the complex interrelationships of comprehensive plan goals and policies, the regulatory framework, and the provisions of on-going related programs such as the planning for the new regional light rail service, special housing funding programs, and design review procedures and guidelines for downtown development. Since many of the DUCPG recommendations will be implemented through further planning refinements by these city professionals, it was crucial to develop a collegial partnership between the volunteers and the staff so that the resulting plan has common ownership.

The Geography

Downtown Seattle is a crescent-shaped area bounded by Elliott Bay (of Puget Sound) on the west, Interstate 5 and Rainier Avenue on the east, Seattle Center and the South Lake Union area on the north, and the Duwamish manufacturing/industrial center on the south. The 945 acre area generally slopes down from east to west. Some slopes are quite steep. The street grid bends twice to follow the waterfront, resulting in interesting north-south arterial corridors and triangular intersections at the seams. Views to the west feature the Bay and distant Olympic Mountains. The urban center contains approximately five million square feet of retail space (2,000 establishments), 28 million square feet of office space, 8,000 dwelling units, and 9,000 hotel rooms. Recently completed or pending public and institutional projects include a symphony hall, art museum, main library, convention center expansion, federal courthouse, city justice center, and city hall. Private development includes office buildings, apartments and condominiums, hotels, and retail centers.

The downtown urban village neighborhoods include:

- Denny Regrade (Belltown) - a "hot" area of residential growth featuring high-end highrise condominium towers, apartments, galleries, cafes, and offices. Some of this neighborhood's issues include protection of older low-rise affordable housing, provision of open space to support the residents, and access to the waterfront.
- Denny Triangle - a relatively underdeveloped area containing surface parking lots poised for substantial new office and residential projects as well as the new federal courthouse and a new police precinct station. Issues include leveraging development capacity to stimulate a mixed-use community, provision of attractive pedestrian streets, and infrastructure capacity. The City and King County are considering the application of an innovative program to transfer development rights from rural areas into the Triangle.
- Commercial Core - the traditional retail center of the region. Also includes the historic Pike Place Market, the civic center and most of the major cultural venues. Issues include wise use of the limited remaining development capacity, protection of historic and small-scale buildings, and increased residential development.

- **Pioneer Square** - the original downtown of Seattle and a busy arts and entertainment center. Now a historic district with limits on development imposed to protect the character and scale of the early buildings. Also the northern edge of the new sports complex containing the Seattle Mariners' Ballpark and Seattle Seahawks' Stadium (replacing the Kingdome). The rehabilitated historic King Street Station is to be used as the City's Amtrak terminal and service other transportation functions. Issues include sensitive infill development to create new housing, including artist's lofts, protection of area retailers from stadium congestion, and improved social service delivery to reduce impacts of the homeless population.
- **Chinatown/ International District** -, Seattle's historic gateway for Asian immigrants. A lively neighborhood of restaurants, shops and service businesses supporting a low-income elderly population as well as a regional cultural and entertainment destination. Issues include protection of the existing housing and increasing the residential population, stadium impacts, and maintenance of the rich multi-ethnic character.

Organization of the Plan

This Plan is a revision of the 1985 Downtown Land Use and Transportation Plan. The revisions include elimination of goals and policies which have either been achieved or outdated; insertion of new goals and policies developed by the DUCPG and the downtown urban village neighborhoods; and reorganization into chapters:

. **I. Introduction**

• **II. Goals**

. **III. Neighborhood Policies**

. **IV. Land Use and Urban Design Policies**

. **V. Open Space Policies**

. **VI. Economic Development Policies**

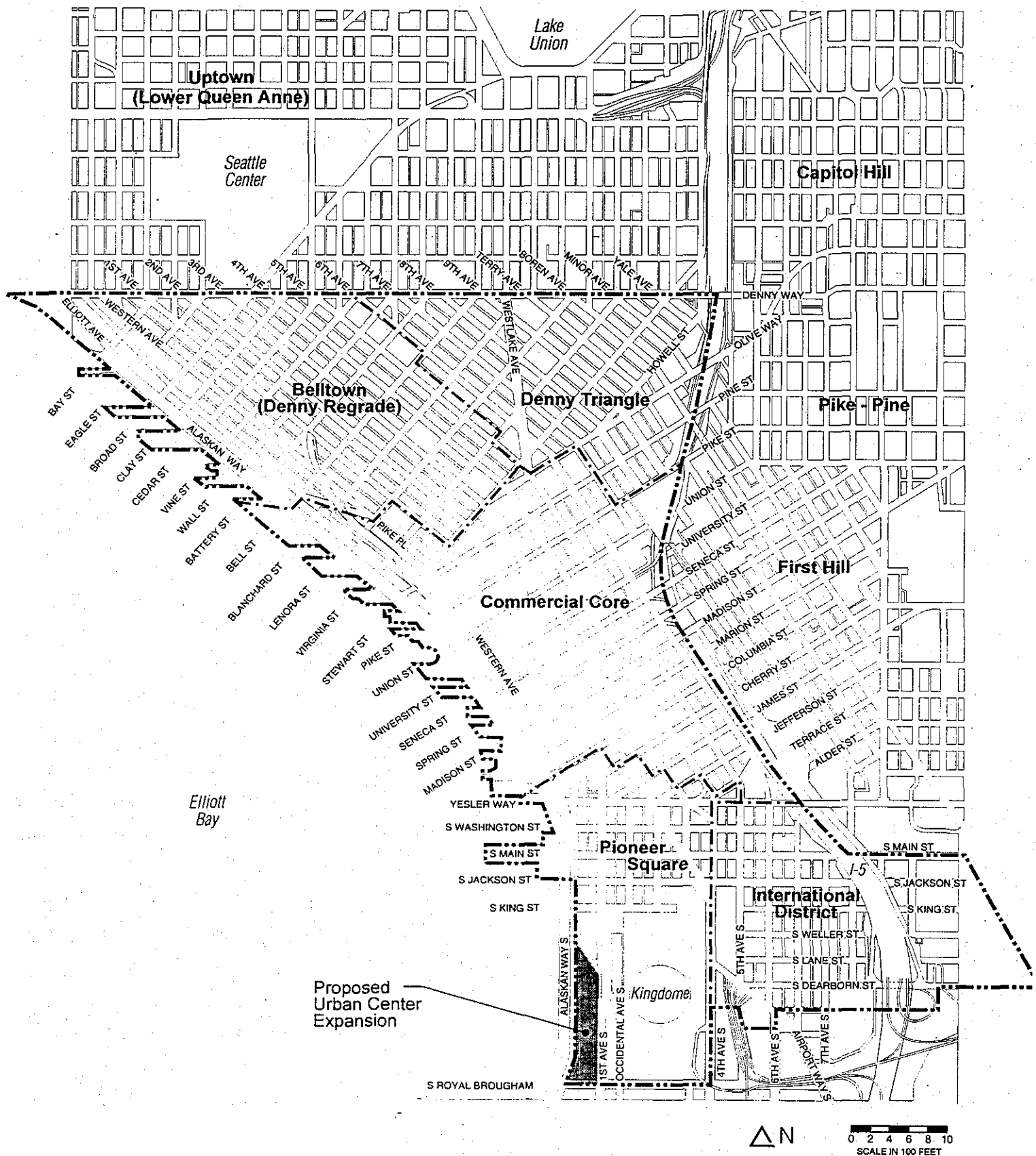
• **VII. Housing and Human Services Policies**

• **VIII. Transportation Policies**

• **IX. Implementation Work Program**

. *Appendices*

It should be recognized that the Downtown Plan is a compilation of the five downtown urban village neighborhood plans which contain significantly greater levels of detail with respect to implementation actions and priorities.



Downtown Neighborhoods